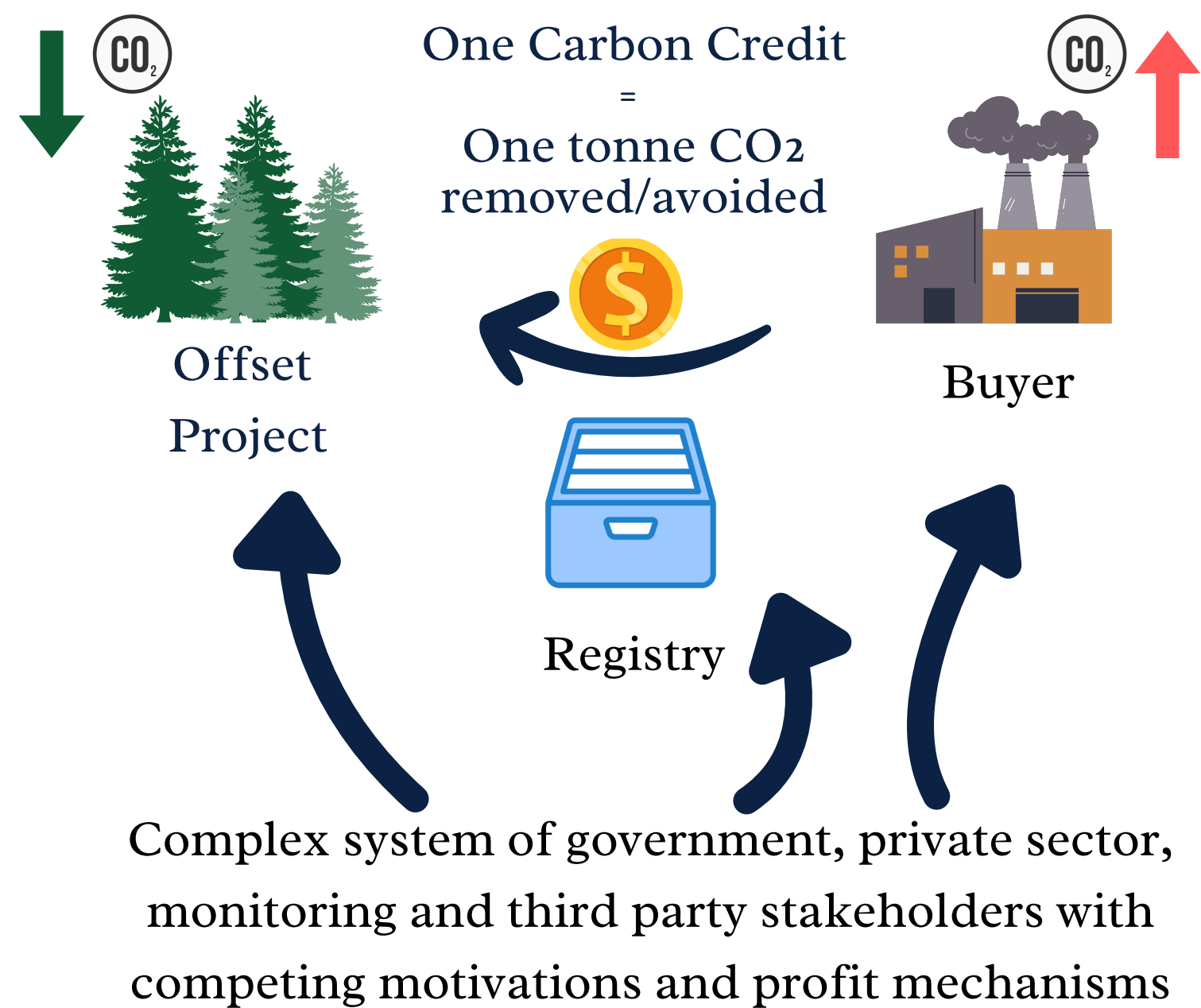




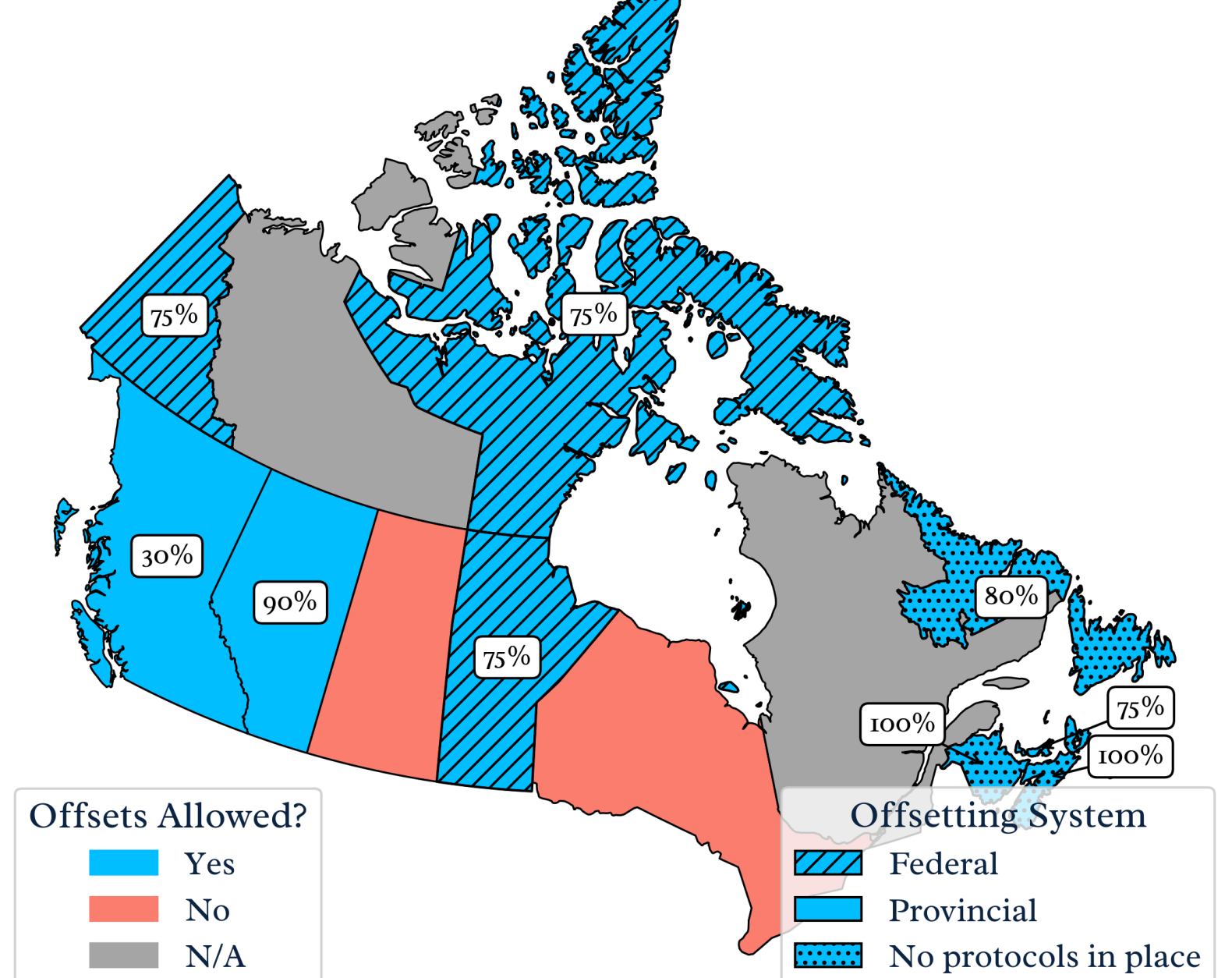
CARBON OFFSETS: CLIMATE ACTION OR SUSTAINABILITY ILLUSION?

Authors: Lucy Binfield, Isabella Morgante, Peter McCartney
University of British Columbia Solutions Scholars Summit, April 2025

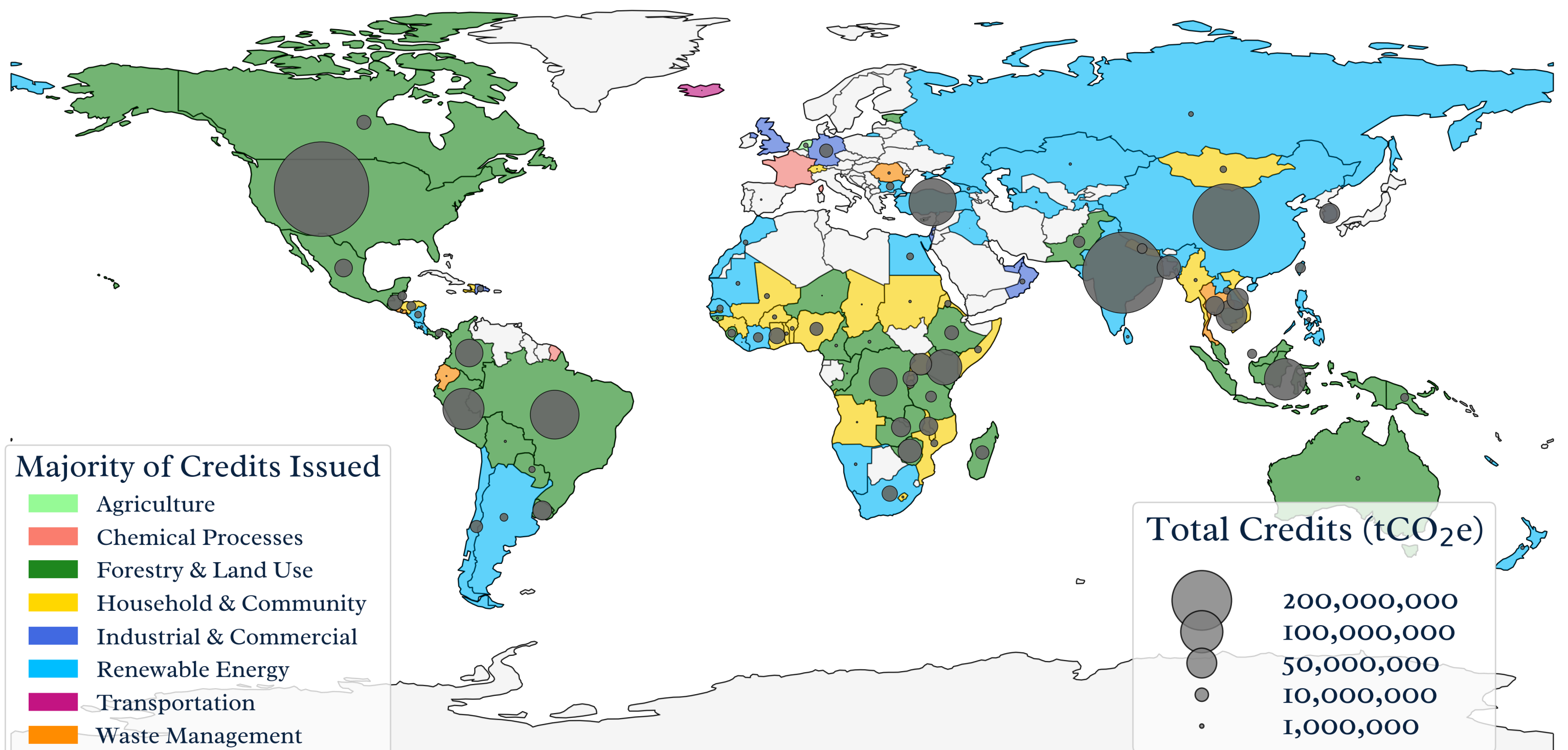
What is a carbon offset?



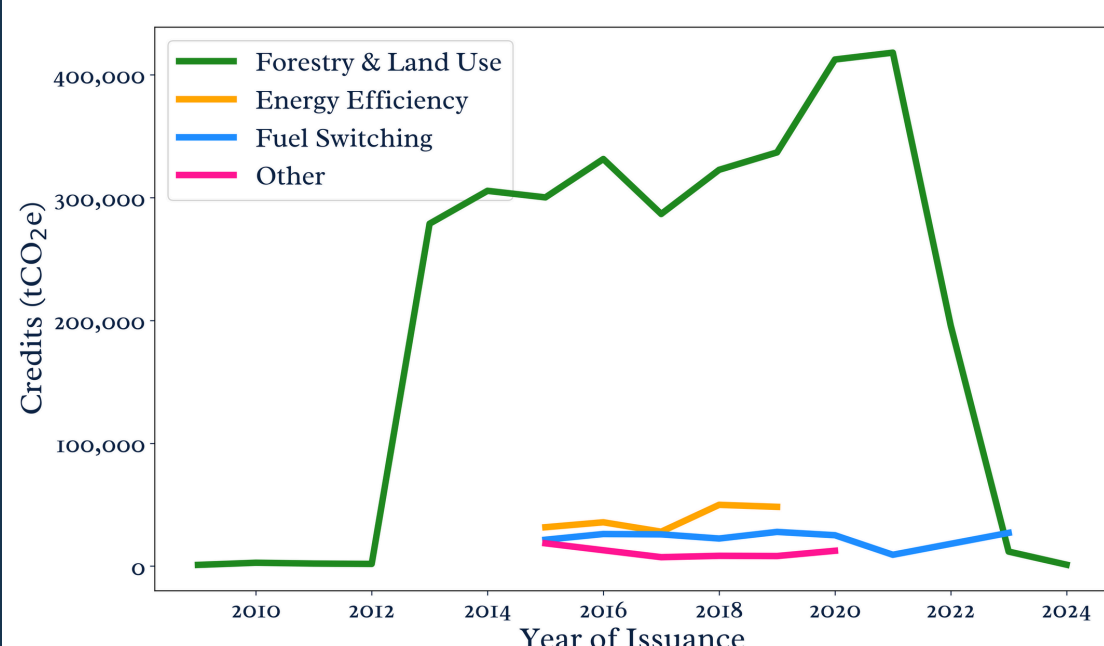
Carbon offsets in Canada's climate policy



Global voluntary carbon credits issued since conception (1996 - 2024).



Majority of BC's offsets are forest-based



Canadian federal climate policy allows industrial polluters to purchase offsets avoid paying a carbon price on their emissions above a benchmark. In British Columbia, 14.4 million tCO₂e credits have been issued since 2009 through provincial protocols for forest management, energy efficiency, and fuel switching. Forest-based carbon offsets, which form the majority of BC's credits, face controversy over their additionality, durability, and risks like wildlife and pests. While industrial players see offsets as cost-saving, the government views them as adding flexibility to its emissions reduction system. Carbon markets in Canada are provincially administered, with significant interprovincial differences in their regulatory use. Our research lays the groundwork for a broader study on carbon offset reform in BC and globally.

Data: Voluntary Registry Offsets Database v2024-12-year-end, Berkeley Carbon Trading Project, Haya et al. (2025); BC Carbon Registry (accessed 15/02/2025)